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THE
HEATHEN
AND THE
CHRISTIAN.

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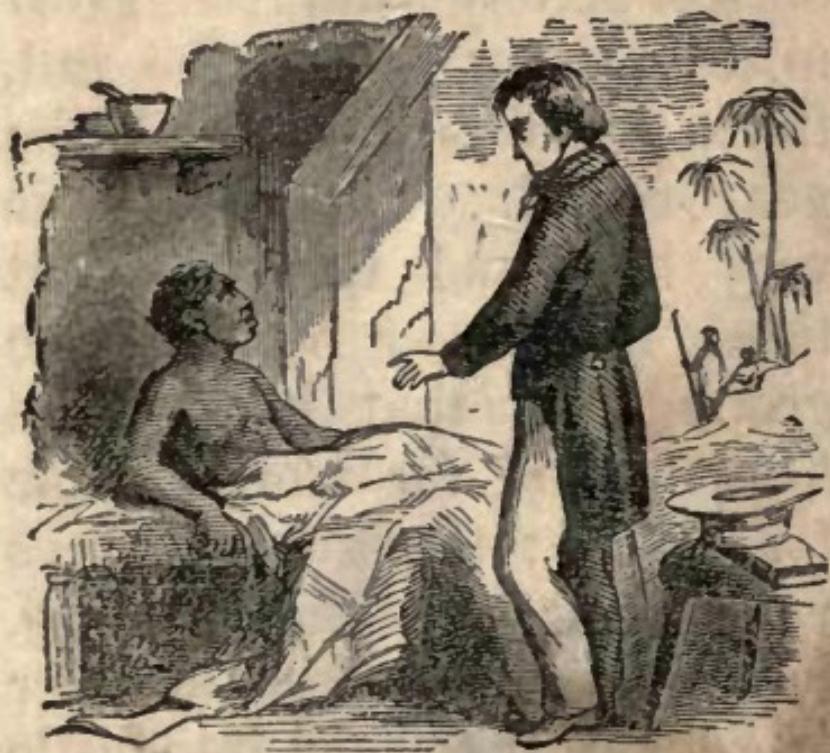


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LOS ANGELES

THE HEATHEN AND THE CHRISTIAN.



FAR away from the country
in which we live there is a
land called Sierra Leone, or,

as the words mean, "Lioness Mountain." It is on the west coast of Africa. Great numbers of stately palm trees grow in every part, and the tall, thick grass is green all the year round. The climate is very hot; and the water at times flows over much of the ground, so that it is not a healthy land for white people to live in; though it agrees very well with the negroes, whose huts are seen all over the country, formed into little villages. After a time, these often become towns, and are called by English names.

The negroes are mostly brought from other parts of Africa to live here. These poor heathens worship evil spirits, which they call "*fetishes*." Almost every thing in nature is said to be the abode of a fetish; as lakes, rivers, rocks, mountains, trees, bushes, birds, beasts, and snakes. When they hear the noise of the waves on the sea-shore, they say, "The fetish is firing!" One kind of snake they allow to crawl about the house, and even kiss and feed it, or hang the living creature round their necks as a charm. In another part of

the country, they keep a crocodile in a large pond, and present to it their prayers, and offerings of white fowls. But missionaries have gone to these ignorant people; and many of them have cast away their idols, and become true Christians.

A great deal might be said about them, but, at this time, we will only relate two interesting facts. We will first give an account of a heathen negro, from which we shall learn the need of missions; and then we will tell of a negro who was converted by the

grace of God, which will show that he blesses the labours of his servants in West Africa.

A missionary was taking a walk after the heat of the day, when he saw a “fetish.” It was made of a cotton-tree, with pieces of dirty rags, feathers, skulls of sheep and goats, old knives and forks, and pieces of iron, hanging from the branches. On the ground there were some shells, filled with palm-oil, as food for the idol. When the missionary saw these things, he was grieved to think that the poor man prayed to the work of his

own hands, seeking help and comfort from wood and rags, and that, too, in a place where the gospel was made known to the people. It was not because the man had not been warned of his sin : he had often been told of the true God, and invited to hear the gospel ; but he used only to answer, "It is my country fashion to worship the fetish."

One day shortly after this, a party of negroes, who had given up their idols, came to the missionary and said they were going to cut down a cotton-tree—a fetish—about

forty feet in height, which had been the object of worship for many years. They soon came to the place where it grew, and began to pull down the old mats, bones of dogs, sheep, and fowls, ragged garments, and other things which were hung upon it; and then tied a rope round the trunk of the tree to pull it to the ground. The owner of the fetish stood by in silence, wondering how the god could suffer himself to be so used. When the tree fell, a great crowd of people gave a shout; while others stood at a distance, afraid to

come near, lest the god should kill them. After the idol was broken to pieces by the crowd, the missionary sought to lead the mind of the owner to know the only living and true God, and to the only way in which sin can be pardoned. The poor man did not seem to attend to what was said ; he was full of sorrow because he had lost his god. How foolish to trust for help in a god who could not deliver himself from being pulled to pieces !

Now let us see how a converted negro can die. It was about a month after the fetish

was cut down, that another missionary was sent to visit a negro, who was very ill. He went, and found the poor man in great pain. "Well," he asked, "how long is it since you were taken sick?"

"Sir, three weeks ago I went to a village near Kent, to cut wood. Last week I fell sick; and after one week I said to my partners, 'I will go home.' I tried my best to get home, but I could hardly reach it. Yesterday I became worse; and to-day I feel very bad. I think I shall die to-day."

"How do you feel at the

near approach of death?" said the missionary.

"All my hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope he will clothe my soul with his righteousness, so that I may not appear before God naked. I feel I am a great sinner; but I also know that Jesus died for me. I have no wish to remain in this wicked world; but there are my wife and children. I feel for them." Then he began to say how much he prayed that his wife might be brought to love the Saviour. After they had spoken together for some time,

the missionary kneeled down, and prayed for the dying negro, who tried to kneel on his bed; but being too weak, he was compelled to lie down again. He then thanked the missionary for the visit he had kindly made to him, and in a solemn manner said he should soon be with Jesus Christ. The missionary now left him to get some medicine for him, but he had not gone far, when word was brought that the happy spirit of the converted negro had taken its flight to the heavenly world.

In the case of the poor idolater, who hung rags and bones on a tree, and called it his god, we see how sad is the state of all men without the light of the Scriptures. They walk “in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;” and are “without Christ—having no hope, and without God in the world.”* But in the pious

* Eph. ii. 12; iv. 16, 17.

African, we see the change that is made when a heathen casts away his vain gods, and believes the gospel. He lives a holy life, for so the missionary says the dying man had lived for many years; and he dies a hopeful and happy death. Let the young reader in this Christian land be careful to improve gospel privileges which are so largely possessed; for to whom much is given, of them much will be required. It will not be asked, in the day of judgment, whether we were born in America, in England or in Africa—whether

we were white or black; but it will be asked whether, when we heard the gospel, we believed it, or not. Few children and youth can be found in these parts of the United States, that have been settled many years, who have not been taught at home or at school something about God, their Maker; of Jesus Christ, their only Saviour; and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the soul and makes it holy. Such children are very guilty, and will be dreadfully punished at last, if they do not love, serve and obey the great God, of whom

the poor heathen have never heard. It will then be known whose we were when on the earth, and with whom we shall dwell for ever. May old and young now flee to Christ, and, through faith in his blood, obtain forgiveness of sin, that they may live a life of glory in heaven !

Aid us, God of love and mercy,
Aid us to extend thy name ;
Aid us through each heathen nation
All thy goodness to proclaim ;
And to tell them
That for them a Saviour came.

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May they know their great Redeemer
Who for them, though strangers, died;
May they look, with deep repentance,
To their Saviour crucified;
Leave their idols,
And desire no God beside.





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